

# ***Cross Cultural Adjustment Problems of Filipino Overseas Contract Workers***

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**P**rotection of Overseas Contract Workers (OCWs) continues to be in the forefront of national policymaking today not only because of the moral obligation to promote their human rights but also because of their contribution to the Philippine economy. It has been acknowledged by economic experts that overseas employment of Filipinos plays a significant role in the economic recovery program. Filipino OCWs are the biggest dollar earners for the country. They are responsible for channeling into the local banking system more than US\$600 million per year in terms of their remittances and secure the much-needed foreign exchange for the Philippine development program. In 1987, OCW remittances totaled 791.91 million which increased to 865.81 million in 1988 (Central Bank of the Philippines). Today these remittances have reached the billion mark which means that OCWs have greatly helped in the improvement of a tight balance of payment positions due to continued trade deficit and mounting foreign debt.

Sad to say, however, OCWs face insurmountable problems in their quest for greener pastures and improved quality of life. Although OCWs remain the biggest dollar earners for the country, government support given them remains inadequate in terms of providing protection and incentives to them. Garming (1989) says there is lack of government policy and program aimed at protecting and enhancing the welfare of overseas workers and at their re-integration to Philippine society upon their return. Aside from the government, there are organizations and agencies belonging to the private sector who are also involved in matters pertaining

to OCWs. However, lack of coordination in the efforts among these government and non-government groups have resulted in overlapping of functions that has led to confusion and waste of resources (Garming, 1989, 0.1).

Some OCWs are plagued with problems from the very start of their application for an overseas job until they return to the Philippines. Even after their return, they are still troubled with personal matters related to their re-integration into the Philippine society.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This paper focuses on the cross-cultural adjustment problems of OCWs. Indeed, contacts between individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds have multiplied as efforts towards political and economic integration, international cooperation and technical assistance have increased. These cross-cultural contacts have frequently led to substantial difficulties on the part of Filipino Overseas Workers in adjusting themselves to an alien society.

Since the Philippine government has been working out measures to improve the plight of Overseas Workers and is prepared to implement plans needed to safeguard their welfare, the objectives of this study becomes not only relevant but timely. It certainly would be worth looking into the motivations of OCWs for applying abroad, the difficulties they encounter while trying to live in an alien society, their coping mechanisms to stresses and strains, and changes in their values and attitudes, if any. This study may eventually lead to a better/deeper understanding of the Filipino OCWs personality and patterns of adjustment.

Specifically the following questions were raised in this study:

1. What were the motivations/reasons of Filipino Overseas Contract Workers for going abroad?
2. What problems did they encounter abroad?
3. How did they cope with the stresses and strains of culture shock?
4. Were they satisfied with their cross-cultural contacts?
5. What did they consider to be advantages and disadvantages of cross-cultural contacts?

### **Significance of the Study**

The complexities of cross-cultural adjustment process among Filipino overseas workers, whether they involve effective problem-solving, substitute defensive adjustment or non-adjustive activities are important to anyone interested in knowing why they act and react as they do and what can be done to facilitate their adjustment. By understanding their behavior patterns one can better help "shape" their lives, direct them and not make them feel that they can be merely tossed about from one situation to another. The results of this study may enhance understanding of the processes Filipino OCWs undergo, and may serve as basis for planning or designing intervention programs by the government for the welfare of those working in alien societies. It is common knowledge that failure to live in or adjust effectively to an unfamiliar culture may have serious or trivial consequences, depending on whether one is an ambassador or a student on a 3-month exchange visit.

In addition to understanding the changes in people's lives brought about by the social, technological and economic factors, there are other reasons for studying cross-cultural contacts/experiences. If people learn a great deal from their experiences, then knowledge of the learning process can be used in program planning. Administrators in charge of arranged cross-cultural encounters can design programs which increase the probability of positive outcomes. One learning possibility (Bochner in Brislin 1981) is that program participants can observe how members of another culture attempt to cope with problems of pollution, inflation, employment. By studying the stresses and strains of such contacts and by analyzing how people overcome their problems, a greater understanding of aggressive and non-aggressive reactions to stress may occur.

It is hoped that knowledge of the stress and strains will indicate the stages at which aggressive reactions are likely, the advantages of preparation for such problems and a greater understanding of the factors which administrators might introduce to minimize long-term difficulties.

### **Hypotheses**

This study has the following hypotheses:

1. That Filipino OCWs experience 'culture shock' of one form or another, especially during their early stages of adjustment to a foreign culture;
2. That they have different motivations/reasons for applying for a job abroad;

3. That they are generally satisfied with their cross-cultural contacts/experiences;
4. That they vary in their coping mechanisms to stresses and strains;
5. That while the search for better opportunities among OCWs offers a bright future for their families, there are also psycho-social effects which lead to break-up of the closely knit family system and deterioration of moral values.

### **Scope and Limitations**

This study drew heavily on the OCW's responses to the questionnaires followed up by personal interviews, each lasting about an hour. Due to time constraint, only 74 OCWs could be reached for this study and most of them (81.08%) had been deployed in Middle East countries. Some of them are back in the Philippines after serving their contracts, while others are preparing either to return to their host country or to go to another country on a new contract. More than half of them reside in various parts of Mindanao and the rest are from Metro Manila.

### **Related Literature**

Orji (1979) has identified some factors that motivated 218 Filipino professionals to work in Nigeria. These are: Nigerian favorable labor market and the generous and attractive fringe benefits, like long vacation leaves, bonuses and allowances, free travel (air fare including family), free or subsidized accommodations, transportation allowances and other conceivable forms of inducement. The strongest attraction of Filipino professionals to Nigeria is high salary and good fringe benefits. Other factors of attraction which were observed from the survey are: opportunity to travel and work abroad, cultural exchange, professional growth, help in developing countries, good working conditions, good climate, to be with spouse and the like. On the part of Philippine-based professionals, the major factors of attraction to Nigeria are: high salary, to improve standard of living, to travel abroad, to learn Nigerian culture and to make new friends.

In terms of civil status and sex, the survey revealed that female respondents are mostly single, accounting for 65% of total, while married males account for 51.8%. The most common duration of employment contract entered into by Filipino professionals is three years.

The problems of Filipino professionals in Nigeria are economic,

sociocultural and psychological in nature and are categorized according to personal, employer, community, co-workers, Nigerian government and Philippine government.

Homesickness leads the reasons listed under personal setback. Other problems include: food adjustments, lack of facilities, high cost of living. Problems with the employer include: being biased/lacks administrative ability, demanding/strict/inconsiderate, gives lots of assignments, proud/arrogant/indifferent, too much red tape, lack of benefits and others. The major problem with the community was poor sanitation followed by lack of recreational facilities. Other problems include bad roads, lack of accommodation, poor security and the like. Filipino employees found their Nigerian counterparts lacking in initiative and uncooperative. Other problems include "unfriendly," "slow/not qualified," communication gap/language barrier, stubborn/indifferent. Common problems with both governments are bureaucracy and lack of security. The need to earn more is the primary reason for their acceptance to stay in Nigeria.

Pourkhorsand (1978) made a study on "The Philippine-Iran Employment Experience 1975-77" and found that the commonly encountered problems of Filipino professionals in Tehran include sociocultural problems, psychological problems and economic problems. He recommends that the Philippine government continues exporting labor to Iran because of its advantages in terms of economic, political and good labor export relations; that the expatriate workers undergo a more rigid and more realistic orientation scheme in order to minimize sociocultural and psychological problems; that a simplified processing of payment of salaries, the working conditions and the type and quality of living quarters be specified in the contract; that the functions of the expatriate worker be enumerated in the contract and not merely the identification of his job title.

Garming (1989) said that problems confronting OCWs can be distinguished from one another and grouped into three stages: pre-employment or before deployment, employment or while at the job site and post-employment or upon return. The most common pre-employment problem is the OCW's falling into the hands of people engaged in illegal recruitment practices. Local recruitment abuses are rampant and although measures against them have been undertaken by concerned authorities, such activities persist. Another pre-employment problem is the application process which can take as long as six months and at great costs. Workers also suffer unpleasant consequences due to various forms of misrepresentation in the documentation and processing of the papers of the applicants.

During employment, even if the worker has passed the pre-employment

stage without encountering any problem, there is no assurance that work would be smooth sailing from then on. Upon his arrival at the workplace, he may be faced with a contract violation or substitution. The usual practice is to entirely change the original contract with one that contains inferior terms and conditions, including the change of salaries and wage rates as well as fringe benefits. Documental cases at POEA show that in many instances, original provisions in the contract are not followed. These provisions may be under- or even non-payment of salaries and wages, overtime pay, vacation pay and sick leave pay.

Workers may also be maltreated by employers. Repatriation of OCWs is also a big problem due to inadequate government protection or assistance. Most OCWs in jobsites also experience homesickness, loneliness or boredom, especially under harsh climate and poor working conditions.

The worries of OCWs do not cease even if they are back home in the Philippines. Those whose stint abroad were unsuccessful experience economic dislocation. They find themselves more indebted than ever. They are also faced with the problem of adjusting to their respective families in particular and with the rest of the home society in general. With the worker's long absence, feelings of alienation is bound to plague some of the members of his family. Some workers have even experienced the break-up of their marriages with either of the party finding comfort in a new relationship. Generally, a returning OCW has to also readjust to Filipino norms and systems.

The Asia-Pacific Regional Conference of Migrant Filipinos in Tagaytay ("Japayuki" *National Midweek*, 1989, p. 8), where Ann-Ann spoke in 1987, collected sad memories of Filipino engineers in the Middle East, of battered mail-order brides in Australia, of domestic helpers in Hongkong, Singapore and Malaysia, of migrant workers in Europe and the United States, all of whom suffered from loneliness, low wages and discrimination. The conference participants laid the problems at the door of Philippine Overseas Employment Administration and asked the government for solutions to their predicament abroad. Former President Aquino, during her trip to Hongkong, called migrant workers the country's economic heroes for their multi-billion dollar remittances most of which went towards paying the national debt. An executive order subsequently signed set aside the last week of March as Migrant Workers Week. But aside from those governmental acts, nothing much has been done to improve the worker's conditions abroad.\*

Orozco (1985) says that in Hongkong and Singapore the Filipina domestics suffer from extreme degradation and humiliation. Because they are seen as economic opportunists by their Chinese employers, they are scolded, shouted at,

physically maltreated or even sexually harassed. Their working hours are unregulated, lasting usually from 5:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. They are not given rest or holidays, are underpaid or made to do extra chores outside of the homes. Rape cases are plenty in Singapore with a bigger number unreported or reported by the Filipinas after several attempts, successful or unsuccessful, by the employers. The Filipinas in Japan have replaced the traditional "Karayukisan" (Japanese women from very poor families sold by their parents to Japanese men during and after the Second World War). They have become now the "Japayukisan" or Southeast Asian women who sell themselves to the Japanese men on a nightly basis. The illegal recruitment of these women has allowed the Japanese to peg their salaries at an amount as low as \$220 or ¥50,000 instead of \$750, which is the legal rate of their Japanese counterparts. Some of the Filipino women "receive" their salary only once, before going home to the Philippines or when they change employers.

According to Orozco (1985) Filipino women suffer from a clash of cultural values in Europe -- between that of a conservative and a highly permissive one; between a feudo-capitalist and a purely capitalist; between a low and a highly materialistic one. The Filipinas brought with them all the value systems they were brought up in the Philippines to the highly industrialized countries which then wielded power to dominate and subordinate these young women's values. In terms of economic, political and cultural aspects, the women suffered greatly before finally adjusting to the place and some are still continuing to suffer mutely if not having broken down internally due to disparities in lifestyles and legal sanctions imposed by most of the European governments on migrant workers. The migrant workers also suffer from language problems except in Great Britain, the mother country of the United States, which also colonized the tongues of the Filipino people.

Espiritu (1987) claims that while there are individual factors that predispose overseas workers towards potential problems, there are circumstances that aggravate these factors -- i.e., legal status of foreign workers, cultural differences, and historical and socio-economic factors. In some countries now hosting Filipino workers, cultural differences are significant. What may be construed as taboo or morally unacceptable is standard practice or permissible behavior in another. In some parts of the Middle East, women who go out unescorted are considered a disgrace to their households. They may even be arrested, particularly if confronted by religious police in the company of a person of the opposite sex other than her own husband. Janjic (1981) identified that the root cause of wage inequalities lay not only in openly discriminating practices but in the existence of a dual labor market which employs men and women in different non-interchangeable jobs. This situation has also led to the much criticized institutionalization of occupational segregation (Hakim 1979) as a result of several factors, among them being legislations stressing role differences.

There are other studies indicating various types of cross-cultural adjustment problems abroad, as might have been experienced by Filipino overseas contract workers.

Zaidi (in Brislin, et.al., 1975) attempted to analyze problems of adjustment of foreign Muslim students in Pakistan and found that: (1) Among the stated reasons of Muslim students for coming to Pakistan were that Pakistan is a Muslim country; admissions are easy; academic attraction, received scholarship, and to improve English. (2) Problems of adjustment fall into three categories: physical, academic and sociocultural.

Physical adjustment problems included fairly spicy food for the taste of many foreigners, inadequate medical facilities, insufficient funds available for expenses.

Academic adjustment problems included difficulty in communication due to lack of proficiency in the local language, new academic demands, institutional setting and people with whom they interact, i.e., poor teacher-student relationship, in which the teacher was perceived as inefficient, not caring about student problems and not encouraging hard work.

With respect to sociocultural adjustment, a majority of the foreign students (93%) were not satisfied with social life in Pakistan. They claim that the main difference between social life in Pakistan and that of their respective countries relate to dress, food, degree of westernization and of course language. In addition, the sharp reaction of foreign students focused on their dislike of restrictions on the freedom of girls and the absence of free mixing between the sexes. The people of Pakistan were perceived to be narrowminded, conservative, formal and poor in social relationships. There were also complaints concerning the social life and lack of entertainment on the campuses. The immediate consequence of a barren social life mixed with a different sociocultural pattern of behavior was that about 59% of the students felt homesick. Foreign students' knowledge about Pakistan and image of a Pakistan *before* arrival was that Pakistan was perceived to be a great Muslim country and the people were helpful, patriotic, friendly and highly religious. *After* having been in Pakistan, the respondents claimed to have known enough about its culture and report that Pakistan was corrupt and underdeveloped. A Pakistani was perceived to be hardworking, progressive, friendly but lacking in unity, is selfish, illiterate, emotional and irresponsible to some.

Kidder (1973) (in Brislin, et.al., 1975) also made a critical review of various studies of foreign travels and cross-cultural contacts in order to arrive at an

empirical understanding of the relationship between duration of stay and adjustment in a foreign land. Her review seems to indicate that there is no consistent pattern of adjustment as a function of duration of stay. The review concluded by presenting four rival hypotheses concerning the patterns of adjustment in living abroad, namely, a positive linear function, a negative linear function, a three-stage spectator, adjustment and coming-to-terms, U-function and a null hypotheses of no significant change in adjustment over time.

Brein and David (1971) have provided a very comprehensive review of the adjustment of sojourners and Guthrie (in Brislin, et.al., 1975) and claim that:

Living in an alien culture can be emotionally exhilarating; it can also be an emotionally shattering experience. Probably most who live for more than a short interval among people with different culture patterns would say that both things happened to them. The difficulties one encounters vary depending on one's age, previous experience, role in the new setting and... one's experiences during the first few days and weeks in the new setting.

The phenomenon of 'culture shock' has been described by Oberg (1960), but Guthrie (1967) suggested that it might be more appropriately called 'culture fatigue'. No matter what the labeling, Litsinger (*Manila Bulletin* Nov. 11, 1990), citing Kalvero Oberg's definition, says that the concept refers to "a general sense of inability to function as self in the present culture you're in because you do not seem to work in the new culture."

Pulling one's roots from one's place of origin is indeed not easy. "Life outside the home culture has its ups and downs. It may be exciting at first but once the truth sinks in, that you'll be in this place for a long period of time, that is the time that culture shock begins," continues Litsinger.

It has been said that an expatriate may experience "shock" in stages some of which may not be noticeable at all. After the "tourist stage" comes the culture shock proper, which is characterized by disorientation, depression, isolation, marital stress, family tension and conflict, inexplicable fits of weeping.

Says Litsinger (*Manila Bulletin*, November 11, 1990):

This (culture shock proper) is the most difficult stage of all. The alien may develop a defense mechanism that he tends to overadapt. After this stage, the rest, such as the attack, the live-and-let-live and approval stages come easy. The best way to enculturate is to give the expatriate a chance to grieve, meaning to allot 3-6 months to learn the customs and traditions of the country. The heaviest burden,

however, usually falls on the wife and the kids.

Oberg (1960) refers to "culture shock" as the emotional and intellectual withdrawal resulting from the unforeseeability of the satisfaction of important psychological demands. It is viewed as a normal process of adaptation to cultural fatigue which focuses on the continuous minute adjustments required. Typical to cross-cultural experiencing, the sojourners' home enculturation, the demands of a host culture and the individual's inadequate coping cause debilitating stress or "shock" and the consequent cultural incompetence. The perceived incompetence and inability may aggravate the shock and lead to a sense of loss, cultural fatigue and even actual rejection of the host society. The loss of mastery and the self-esteem is analogous to infantile regression. Common symptoms of culture shock are: 1) negative hostile remarks about the host culture 2) seeking out others like himself 3) idealization of the home culture 4) poor concentration 5) diminished task performance and 6) general feelings of exhaustion (Oberg 1960 in Roco 1990 and Shizuru 1986).

The severity of the culture shock increases with the degree of difference between the host and home culture. However, having stable financial support lessens culture shock.

Guthrie (in Brislin, et.al., 1975) notes that learning to live in an alien society means much more than learning to speak a strange language, to eating familiar food and to observe different social customs. It means that one has to cope with a loss of identity and familiarity and to get along without some of the social events that provide encouragement, direction and meaning in our lives. These deprivations cause the sojourner to be discouraged or angry and oftentimes disillusioned.

Triandis (in Brislin, et.al., 1975) also admits that a major social problem of our time concerns the poor interpersonal relationships among individuals who belong to different cultures. He observes that:

The problem can be seen vividly in the tensions of police-citizen relations of the American ghetto, the separation of Belgian universities by language, the communal conflict in Northern Ireland... Even in situations where cooperation is highly desirable, such as when a husband-wife pair or a boss-subordinate pair consists of individuals from different cultures or a clinician interacts with his clients, cultural differences lead to major interpersonal difficulties.

In addition, Triandis, et. al. (1972) find that when people belong to different cultures or have different background subjective and interpersonal

interaction is painfully unpleasant. In particular, Triandis (in Brislin, et.al., 1975) draws attention to problems of communication across cultural boundaries and attitudinal correlates of cross-cultural "misunderstanding."

The foregoing literatures seem to suggest that adjustment problems arises when people from different cultures meet. And cross-cultural adjustment is not an easy task! This being so, these problems have to be necessarily studied/identified and efforts have to be directed at finding more effective ways of improving intergroup relationships, facilitating physical, academic, sociocultural adjustment and the like. The government must continue to search for more effective ways of facilitating cross-cultural adjustment in order to lessen the effects of 'culture shock', 'culture fatigue' or even 'shell shock.'

## **Methodology**

### **Sample**

The subjects (Ss) consisted of 74 Filipino Overseas Contract Workers (OCWs) whose ages ranged from 24-58 years old with a mean age of 37.83 years. Fifty-nine or 79.73% were male and 15 or 20.78% were female. Eleven or 14.86% were single, 62 or 83.78% were married and one or 1.35% was a widower.

Number of dependents ranged from 0 to 11, with an average of 3.67. Length of stay in host country varied from 3 months to 9 years with 21 or 36.49% having finished a contract of 3 years and 23 or 31.08% having worked for 4-6 years. Nine or 12.16% stayed for a year or less, while 15 or 20.27% stayed between 7-9 years.

Table 1 indicates the area of deployment of the subjects. As can be gleaned from the table, two were deployed in Africa, 3 in Europe, 2 in America, 7 in Asia and 60 or 81.08% in the Middle East. Majority or 32.43% were working in Saudi Arabia. Ten or 13.51% were deployed in Baghdad/Iraq with an equal number also in Riyadh. Seven were employed in Kuwait.

With respect to occupations, 16 or 21.62% were engaged in professional, managerial and technical occupations. An equal number were also involved in structural work occupations. Fifteen or 20.27% were hired for machine trades occupations, while 10 were in miscellaneous occupations such as binding technician, truck driver, warehouseman, transmitter technician and foreman (See Table 2). Service occupations included domestic helpers / chambermaids,

**Table 1**  
**Areas of Deployment of 74**  
**Overseas Contract Workers (OCWs)**

Country	No.	%
1. Africa (unspecified)	2	2.70
2. Europe		
Finland	1	1.35
Greece	1	1.35
Unspecified	1	1.35
3. America		
South America (unspecified)	1	1.35
USA (unspecified)	1	1.35
4. Asia		
Hongkong	2	2.70
Japan	2	2.70
Singapore	2	2.70
India	1	1.35
5. Middle East		
Bahrain	2	2.70
Egypt	1	1.35
Iran	1	1.35
Iraq/Baghdad	10	13.51
Kuwait	7	9.46
Libya	2	2.70
Saudi Arabia	24	32.43
Riyadh	10	13.51
United Arab Emirates	2	2.70
Yemen	1	1.35
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>100.00</b>

storekeeper, headwaiter/receptionists, and dressmaker. Structural work occupations included, erector/rigger/splicer, carpenter, telephone technician, transmission network operator, civil work foreman/supervisor, technician, design/structural

engineer, master electrician, communications technician, artist/painter and electrician. Machine trades occupations included automotive electrician, oil changer, heavy equipment operator, mechanic, refrigeration and air conditioning technician, light and heavy equipment mechanic and crane operator. Professional, managerial, electrical engineer, dentist, agriculturist, teacher, statistician, cashier, registered nurse among others. Clerical occupations are composed of the shop clerks, typists and office clerks.

## **Procedure**

1. A 22-item questionnaire on Cross Cultural Adjustment Problems of Filipino Overseas Contract Workers was developed, covering among others the following aspects: (a) date of departure for host/foreign country; (b) motivation/reasons for going abroad; (c) problems/difficulties encountered while residing in an alien society (culture shock); (d) reactions to stresses and strains (coping mechanisms); (e) state of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with cross-cultural contacts; (f) advantages/disadvantages of cross-cultural contacts; (g) perception of people in host country, (*knowledge* about and *image* of people in host country before arrival and after having been in foreign country); (h) changes in attitudes and values if any; (i) recommendations/suggestions for prospective migrants and government agencies to facilitate cross-cultural adjustment abroad.
2. Following the construction of the questionnaire was its pretesting among a group of prospective respondents to check on the vagueness or clarity of the items. After the pre-testing, the tool was revised.
3. Administration of questionnaire to 74 Filipino Overseas Contract Workers who were then vacationing in the Philippines or preparing to leave/go back either to host country or a new country on a new contract.
4. Follow-up interviews lasting for about an hour.
5. Content analysis of responses to questionnaires and interviews.
6. Statistical treatment of data (frequencies, percentages and means).
7. Interpretations of Results and Findings, suggestions and/or Recommendations.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Reasons/Motivations for Applying Abroad**

The results show that the number one reason for applying for a job is economical/financial, e.g., to have a bigger income which will consequentially lead to a satisfactory standard of living for the family (see Table 3). The second major reason is fulfillment of a dream of owning a house and lot. Of course, some were motivated by the love for adventure/new challenges, searching for a greener pasture or "brighter future," professional growth and education of children. Other reasons given still related to the first five were (1) to have a broader outlook in life, (2) attractive compensation and benefits, (3) putting up a business venture, (4) increase in country's dollar earnings, (5) develop self-reliance/independence from family, (6) collecting souvenirs as a hobby, and (7) job re-assignment.

### **Problems Encountered by 74 Filipino OCWs Abroad (1991)**

The problems reported by the Ss in this study may be classified into those relating to (a) physical adjustment, (b) sociocultural adjustment, (c) psychological adjustment, and (d) other problems, e.g., those related to violations of contract terms and conditions, as well as unremitted salaries.

Table 4 indicates the problems and, as Zaidi (1975), Espiritu (1987) and Garming (1989) would point out, while there are individual factors that predispose Filipino OCWs towards potential problems, there are circumstances that aggravate these factors, i.e., cultural differences, historical, religious and socio-economic factors.

A new social situation is always beset with problems of adjustment. This happens everywhere and to everyone. Filipino OCWs, in spite of their supposedly high motivation and attraction, cannot avoid facing a few adjustments in their life pattern. Immediately upon arrival in a foreign country, they face an unfamiliar language, different food preparations, and in most cases different physical climatic features. In addition to these, when they arrive at their host country they may find different codes of behavior and a new system of work administration, all of which may upset their expectations for and about the host country. Various other problems, such as health problems, lack of social life, homesickness, and racial discrimination may add to these difficulties.

**Table 2**  
**Distribution of 74 OCWs Based on**  
**Occupations (1991)**

Occupation	No.	%
Professional, Managerial & Technical	16	21.62
Clerical Occupations	5	6.76
Sales Occupations	1	1.35
Service Occupations	11	14.86
Machine Trades Occupations	15	20.27
Structural Work Occupations	16	21.62
Miscellaneous Occupations	10	13.51
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table 3**  
**Reasons/Motivations for Applying Abroad**

Reasons	No.	%
1. Bigger income/improved standard of living for family	59	79.73
2. Professional growth	13	17.57
3. Greener pasture, brighter future	10	13.51
4. Broader outlook in life	1	1.35
5. Love for adventure/new challenges	22	29.73
6. Attractive compensation and fringe benefits	1	1.35
7. Putting up a Business Venture	3	4.05
8. Education of Children	9	12.16
9. Increase in Country's Dollar Earnings	2	2.70
10. Independence/Self-reliance	1	1.35
11. Fulfillment of a dream of owning a house and lot	25	33.78
12. Collecting souvenirs as a hobby	1	1.35
13. Job Reassignment	1	1.35

**Table 4**  
**Problems Encountered by 74 OCWs Abroad**

Problems	No.	%
<b>I. Physical Adjustment</b>		
1. food problem	24	32.43
2. Adverse climatic conditions, e.g. long hot summer extremely cold temperature hailstone, hailstorm, sandstorm	51	68.92
3. inadequate medical facilities	7	9.46
4. lack of transport facilities to jobsite	5	6.76
5. financial problems	11	14.86
6. health problems	30	40.54
7. adverse working conditions	12	16.22
<b>II. Sociocultural Adjustment</b>		
1. language barrier	55	74.321
2. lack of social life (no entertainment, movies, disco, beach house)	31	41.87
3. differences in lifestyle (customs, traditions, practices)	41	55.40
4. uncooperative administrative staff	13	17.57
5. too many restrictions on sex (no mingling between sexes)	45	60.81
<b>III. Psychological Needs</b>		
1. feeling of rejection (racial discrimination)	27	36.49
2. homesickness	58	78.38
3. incompetent, demanding, arrogant, perfectionist, inconsiderate, strict boss	14	18.92
4. boss (unfriendly, hostile, indifferent, suspicious, uncaring, etc.)	25	33.78
5. dissatisfied with aloof co-workers/cannot trust them	23	31.08
6. problem in dealing with relatives of employer	1	1.35
7. workaholic boss	1	1.35
8. no personal advancement/no chance for professional growth	1	1.35

Table 4, continued...

<b>IV. Others</b>		
1. Job title/salary stipulated in contract does not match with actual responsibilities/ pay received	4	5.40
2. Delay of salary (up to 4 months)	1	1.35
3. Unpaid/unremitted salaries (up to 4-6 months because of war or other reasons)	3	1.05
4. plenty of salary deductions	1	1.35
5. low salary	1	1.35
6. Use of time/movement restricted/no freedom to socialize even with foreigners	1	1.35
7. no separation pay (7 years in service)	1	1.35
8. money sent through a friend but never received by my family	1	1.35

One aspect of Arab social life, which may provide disillusionment to many foreign male Filipino OCWs relates to the special position of females in the Arabian cultural context. Arab society, in spite of being developed in some fields, prescribes more restriction to females than to males. There is very little free mixing between the sexes and therefore social relationships paralleling those of Western or westernized societies are very restricted. The foreign male OCWs report about the isolation and restrictions in their social life. They experience these restrictions both inside and outside the work settings. Because many of the Filipino OCWs have been accustomed to free mixing and unrestricted social contacts between the sexes, they find the social contacts in Saudi Arabia, for example, most frustrating.

### **Physical Adjustment**

As Zaidi (1975) puts it, food is a hazard in a foreign country and the Arab cuisine is fairly spicy for the taste of many foreigners, including those from certain countries in Asia. Majority of those Filipino OCWs interviewed reported that to solve their food problems they usually resort to cooking their own food, thus reverting to their native food preferences. It appears that food is not really a major problem for Filipino OCWs as, sooner or later, each one of them becomes adjusted to the variation in food habits.

With respect to proper medical and transport facilities, majority of the

OCWs reported that medical facilities are excellent and they are usually transported to and from job site.

A major problem of Filipino OCWs is adverse climatic conditions, e.g., the long hot summer, sometimes extremely cold temperature, hailstone, hailstorm, sandstorm, which gives rise to health problems like nosebleeding, cracking of lips, kidney stones and others.

One of the factors that gives a sense of security to life in a foreign country is the amount of money one has available for expenses. In case of financial difficulties the OCWs reported that they resort to "bayanihan" in order to alleviate a *kabayan*'s financial rouble. Or, where the boss is kind enough, they resort to "cash advance" until payment comes in full.

Adverse working conditions occur, such as among drivers of transport of junk materials. One OCW, age 59, reported that upon arrival in Saudi, he wondered why nobody fetched him. It was only after a day that his boss showed up. He (the OCW) was formally dressed, imagining with all excitement that he would be driving a Mercedes Benz or an airconditioned car. To his dismay, he discovered that he was going to transport junk steel and other scrap iron.

### **Sociocultural Adjustment**

The difficulty in communication due to lack of proficiency in the local language poses another problem for the Filipino OCWs. This is quite a familiar problem in any cross-cultural contact (Orji, 1979; Pourkhorsand, 1978) and the only way to solve it is to learn the language. In fact, the majority of the subjects interviewed in this study have tried to learn the complexities of the local language. However, there still remained the only vehicle of communication available to them, which was English, in which most of them were somewhat deficient.

Language is a significant factor in shaping their perception of their host country's institutions. A significant consequence of the language difficulty is that they do not have frequent social contact with their Arab co-employees. Social contacts are mostly confined to their *kababayans*.

Forty-one and eighty-nine percent reported lack of social life (entertainment such as moviehouses, discos, beach houses). To meet this problem, they viewed films within the confines of their living quarters.

Differences in lifestyle (customs, traditions, practices) were also noted.

One OCW reported, for example, that he had to wait a long time to do his job because the household must first hide all the women before he could enter to fix or install a telephone. "*Walang kubierto pagkumakain, kamay lang ang ginagamit. May furniture ngunit hindi ginagamit,*" observed another OCW from Saudi. In Kuwait, one domestic helper described Kuwaitis as "*parang kambing, nguya nang nguya*" (like a goat, always chewing).

Majority of the OCWs also report that most foreigners in their host country do not bathe regularly, which explains their strong body odor. Some Filipino OCWs describe female Arabs as "*parang uwak kasi lumalabas lang kung gabi at panay itim and suot.*" (like crows, they come out only at night in black attire with veils covering their faces). They also were told that smoking, drinking, eating were prohibited during Ramadhan or the fasting month. Women were prevented from driving. No pork was served. "*Pag lumalakad, nauuna and lalaki kaysa babae. Mga babae ay huling kumakain*" (when they walk, the man goes before the woman. The woman eats after the man at mealtime), observed another OCW from Saudi. Strictly no dancing, no drinking, no holding hands, related another. These are just some of the customs and practices in Saudi Arabia, as noted by most Filipino OCWs in this study.

There was also the problem of uncooperative administrative staff, as reported by 13 or 17.57% of the OCWs. Or could it just be that there was a communication gap between the administrative staff and the employees?

### **Psychological Problems**

Some OCWs (27 or 36.49%) reported feelings of rejection, more particularly racial discrimination, in their host country. They said that among other foreigners, even if they were occupying the same position as the Filipinos, the salary of the British or American was usually higher.

Homesickness, similar to the ones reported in Zaidi (1975) and Orji (1979) leads the problems under psychological adjustment. Relationship between boss and co-workers likewise posed a major problem. Some 25 or 33.78% perceived their superiors as "unfriendly, hostile, indifferent, suspicious and uncaring." Some 23 or 31.08% of the OCWs were unhappy with aloof, uncooperative co-workers. They complained that they could not trust them. Some likewise rated their bosses as "incompetent, demanding, arrogant, perfectionist, inconsiderate and strict."

Other problems cited were relationship with employer's relatives, a 'workaholic boss,' and no chance for professional growth. "*Lalo ako naging*

*ignorante*," complained one domestic helper who happened to be a commerce graduate. "*Lalong nag-deteriorate and English ko*," reports another. These were but two instances in which personal/professional growth was inhibited. Indeed, as Espiritu (1987) has pointed out, in some of the countries hosting Filipino workers, cultural differences were significant. What may be construed as taboo or morally unacceptable is standard practice or permissible behavior in another.

In some parts of the Middle East, women who go out unescorted are considered a disgrace to their households. The woman may even be arrested, particularly if confronted by religious police in the company of a person of the opposite sex other than her own husband.

In the Philippines, domestic helpers are at perfect liberty to go shopping or just walk around, particularly on their days off. When this practice is brought to the new host country, a clash of cultures ensues and problems result.

The head of the household in the host country forbids the domestic from going out. The domestic helper sees it as being imprisoned and cut off from her support system of other compatriots similarly inclined. The domestics runs away and is unable to get a new post because her work permit is with her first employer who now will refuse to part with it unless he is refunded the cost of transport of the maid.

"Or, consider the matter of a dress code," continues Espiritu (1987). "In some countries in the Middle East women are covered practically from head to foot." Filipino women are used to working in tight-fitting jeans and t-shirts. Some Arab husbands see this as an invitation to seduction, as do many wives. As insignificant as this cultural gap may seem, it has caused many problems at the job sites.

The responses in this study also clearly substantiate the view that majority of the 74 Filipino OCWs in the Middle East, particularly in Saudi Arabia, are not satisfied with their social life. The main features of the differences between social life in the Middle East and the Philippines relate to dress, food, degree of westernization and, of course, language. In addition, the Filipino OCWs focused their dislike on restrictions on the freedom of girls and the absence of free mixing between the sexes. The Arab people were perceived to be religious fanatics, hypocrites, narrowminded, traditional, conservative, proud, arrogant but ignorant and illiterate. "*Kulang sa technique sa pagtatrabaho at experiensya*" (lacking in technique/skills necessary for job performance and experience). There were also complaints concerning the social life and lack of entertainment. The immediate consequence of a barren social life mixed with a different socio-cultural pattern of

behavior was that about 78.38% felt homesick, most especially during the first years of stay in the host country.

#### Respondents in this study report:

*"Sa Saudi Arabia, kung binangga and kotse mo, ikaw pa ang may kasalanan, kasi and katuwiran nila ay kung hindi ka pumunta roon ay hindi ka nabangga"* (In Saudi Arabia, if your car is bumped or hit by another, you are to blame, because if you did not go there in the first place, the accident would not have happened). So this is the kind of justice they have there. If you met an accident, necessarily it was your fault and nobody else's... *Hindi tinatangap ang kamalian* (Blame is not accepted by natives but non-compliance with social laws by the Filipino means punishment or detention.)

#### Others

Espiritu's (1987) study involving Filipino female OCWs reported violation of contract terms and conditions, such as longer working hours, non-payment of overtime and other benefits, unjust termination and dismissals, etc. as among the problems usually encountered by female Filipino workers on the job site. There seems to be some truth to this statement as 4 or 5.40% in this study mentioned that their job title and salary stipulated in the contract did not match actual pay/responsibilities. In one case, delay of salary reached up to four months. Three complained about unpaid or unremitted salaries. Some protested about salary deductions, low salary or no separation pay, even after working for seven years. At one time, claimed an OCW, his money sent through a friend never reached his family -- a stroke of bad luck, perhaps. Orozco (1985) bewailed that some Filipino women received their salary only once, that is, just before return to the Philippines.

Another problem reported by Filipino domestic helpers in the Middle East was the restriction on the use of time and of freedom to socialize even with other Filipinos during days off. One case reported that she was given only 15 minutes each time to go to the post office to send her remittances.

Indeed, as Garming (1989) has already indicated, even if the worker has passed the pre-employment stage without encountering any problem, there is no assurance that it would be smooth sailing from then on. Upon his/her arrival in the host country, he may be faced with contract violation or substitution, non-payment, delay of payment or underpayment of salaries, harsh climate and poor working conditions.

## Reactions to Stresses and Strains (Culture Shock)

*"Bakit ako nagpunta rito? Ganito pala ang mga tao dito?"* (Why did I come here? So this is how people here are like?) These were the words of a Filipino midwife upon her arrival in Riyadh. Indeed, among the respondents in this study, 64 or 86.48% reported having experienced culture shock of many forms. Shock as to food, language, harsh climate conditions, and people's different behavior/lifestyle.

Oberg (106) has pointed out common symptoms of culture shock, namely, (1) negative hostile remarks about the host culture, (2) seeking out others like himself, (3) idealization of the home culture, (4) poor concentration, (5) diminished task performance, and (6) general feelings of exhaustion. The severity of the culture shock increases with the perceived degree of difference between the host and the home culture.

How did the respondents in this study respond to culture shock? Table 5 indicates their reactions to their stresses and strain, their coping mechanisms. Majority of them (53 or 71.62%) managed to write correspondences/letters to their loved ones and friends almost every week or month, especially when they are bitten by the "pangs" of loneliness: Others cannot help but cry silently, though they are usually comforted by other Pinoys there. Or they find comfort in the thought that they were there to help their families -- send children to school or buy a house and lot. When these thoughts come to mind, loneliness disappears. Then, too, some find comfort in praying, reading books, magazines, listening to music, watching TV, video films, doing exercises, playing ball games/sports, fishing.

With regards to the language problem, the Filipino OCWs resort to sign language, keeping a dictionary handy, learning Arabic or seeking an interpreter (usually a Filipino) for the host language. Otherwise, they use English. Acceptance and adjustment to cultural differences/lifestyle becomes a usual mode of adjustment. This implies having a high level of tolerance and understanding or empathy.

Gradually or eventually, the Filipino OCWs, become acclimatized as they no longer suffer too much from nosebleed, cracking of lips, asthma allergies and other ailments caused by extreme weather conditions.

Cooking their own food has become the rule for most OCWs, as they dislike the "strange" spicy foods. They revert to their native food preferences. Bayanihan (cooperation) occurs when the OCWs are in financial difficulties. Sometimes, too, they apply for cash advances from the employer, if allowed. Other psychological problems are shared with a close friend or confidante. Boredom and fatigue are sometimes resolved through sleeping and eating.

**Table 5**  
**Reactions to Stresses and Strains (Culture Shock)**

	No.	%
1. Reading Bible/praying	10	13.51
2. Reading books, novels, magazines	22	29.73
3. Listening to mood music (stereo music)	27	36.49
4. Watching TV, video films indoors	32	43.24
5. Writing letters (correspondences)	53	71.62
6. Exercise, parlor games, sports	22	29.73
7. Crying or 'humahagulgol' (first few weeks)	26	35.14
8. 'Bayanihan' (financial problems)	15	20.27
9. Talking it out with a close friend or confidant	15	20.27
10. Adjusting to co-workers, boss, making friends	23	31.08
11. Using sign language, dictionary or learning Arabic or seeking an interpreter of the host language	45	60.81
12. Sleeping and eating	8	10.81
13. Being optimistic (positive outlook); considering frustrations as challenges for personal growth	19	25.67
14. Acclimatization/adjustment to weather extremes, sandstorms, etc.	40	54.05
15. Cooking one's food the Filipino way	39	52.70
16. Acceptance and adjustment to cultural differences/life style (acculturation)	45	60.81
17. Develop high frustration tolerance "tatagan ang sarili," "tibayan and loob"	35	47.30
18. Develop flexibility and self-control	13	17.57
19. Lower expectations from people so you won't be disappointed	11	14.86
20. Seek ways to escape from devastating effects of Gulf War through aid of Philippine Embassy	3	4.05
21. Fishing	2	2.70

Some OCWs have decided to just adopt a positive outlook about life's problems in general -- to be flexible or openminded, to lower expectations of people, develop a high frustration tolerance ('tatagan and sarili' or 'tibayan ang loob'). Others seek help through the Philippine embassy in their respective areas of assignment. Thus the findings indicate that Filipino OCWs have different modes of adjustment to culture shock (stresses and strains).

### **Advantages/Disadvantages of Cross-Cultural Contacts**

Table 6 indicates some advantages as well as disadvantages of cross-cultural contacts. Majority (55 or 74.32%) revealed that one advantage of cross-cultural contacts is the ability to take the viewpoint of other people. Half of the OCWs (50%) also stated that cross-cultural encounters expose them to different cultures (customs, practices, folkways, mores), while a good number indicated that living in another culture made them more self-reliant and understanding of the peculiarities of other cultures. Some felt that they have broadened their intellectual and social horizons/experiences and developed workable rather than idealistic policies. A significant number reported to have undergone some personality changes and/or develop attitudinal changes, respect towards people of other cultures and self-control.

However, more than half complained about physical separation from home/family/loved ones. They regretted having missed the growing years of their children. Other lament over not being able to practice their own religion/lifestyle because of so many restrictions. Another frightening consequence of physical separation from family is possible break-up of marriage. As Espiritu (1989) puts it:

From a social perspective, women workers also face the possible deterioration of marriage and family ties, the neglect of children and the consequent deterioration in discipline in moral values, the change in moral values and the psychological stress that in many cases lead to actual breakdowns.

A number expressed dissatisfaction over racial discrimination, prejudices and loss of identity as a Filipino as they get acculturated. They are forced to adopt the religion of host country, or to wear its national costume. Cultural differences give rise to misunderstandings. Some were discontented about the host country's being backward technologically or being old-fashioned. Not only did they fear deterioration of marriage and family ties, but also of their English. One complained about being miseducated, as he has unconsciously imbibed some of the local negative traits.

### **Changes in Values and Attitudes of Filipino OCWs**

The OCWs were asked to check out some values which they believed they already had internalized from their home culture before departure and which they believe they had imbibed from their host culture. Table 7 indicates the percentage of their perceptions. As can be gleaned from the Table, the frequencies/percentages increase substantially for most of the values, except cooperation, punctuality, friendship and frankness, which means the OCWs demonstrated frankness,

**Table 6**  
**Advantages/Disadvantages of Cross-Cultural Contacts**

Advantages	No.	%
1. Increased self-reliance/independence	45	60.81
2. Ability to take viewpoint of other people	55	74.32
3. Ability to develop workable rather than idealistic policies	39	52.70
4. Broaden intellectual and social horizon/experiences	41	55.40
5. Better understanding of other cultures	49	66.22
6. Exposure to different culture (customs practices, folkways, mores)	50	67.57
7. Personality and/or attitudinal change (develop trust and confidence, humility, perseverance/patience, courage, respect, self-control)	45	0.81
Disadvantages		
1. Physical separation from home/family/loved ones.	55	74.32
2. "Nagloloko and asawa ko, naging irresponsible, walang disiplina," broken marriage	3	4.05
3. Cannot practice own religion/lifestyle because of many restrictions	26	5.13
4. "Lalo ako naging ignorante" -- they are backward technologically: old fashioned in their ways	5	6.76
5. "Made my English go from bad to worse" (e.g., "The Boss tolding...")	5	6.76
6. Racial discrimination/prejudices	18	24.32
7. Loss of identity as a Filipino because of acculturation	4	5.40
8. Forced to adopt their religion and wear their national costume	2	2.70
9. Cultural differences/conversations give rise to differences of opinions, argument/misunderstanding	21	28.38
10. "Copied some of their negative traits"/miseducation	1	1.35

friendships, punctuality, and/or cooperation even before departure to host country.

The data show that more OCWs reported having gained self-confidence, self-assertiveness, risk-taking or courage, broadmindedness, respectfulness, religiosity, thrift, closer family ties, self-discipline, obedience and humility after working in the host country than before their departure from the Philippines. Granting that these are in fact true confessions about themselves, these would constitute another positive contribution to the development of the Filipino OCWs personality as a whole.

**Table 7**  
**Some Values Reported by Overseas Contract Workers Before**  
**and After Having Been in the Host Country**

	Before		After	
	No.	%	No.	%
1. cooperation	34	45.94	34	45.94
2. self-confidence	23	31.08	34	45.94
3. self-reliance	21	28.38	45	60.81
4. self-assertiveness/initiative	21	28.38	28	37.84
5. risk-taking/courage	20	27.03	30	40.54
6. broadmindedness	24	32.43	41	55.40
7. respectfulness	20	43.24	52	70.27
8. nationalism	24	32.43	34	45.94
9. punctuality	20	27.03	23	31.08
10. religiosity	23	31.08	27	36.48
11. frankness	23	31.08	24	32.43
12. thrift	17	22.97	32	43.24
13. friendship	31	41.89	36	48.65
14. closer family ties	28	37.84	38	51.35
15. helpfulness	24	32.73	30	40.54
16. self-discipline/obedience/ humility	19	25.67	55	74.32

The fairly crude data in Table 8 clearly point to the attitude of Filipino OCWs toward the natives in their host country. When asked if they are willing to go back to their host country, the majority answered "yes," but some with certain conditions, like higher or more attractive salary or if allowed to bring the family

along. Were they willing to marry a foreigner? The answer was "no" for the majority. But 27.02% answered, "It depends." It seems that they were willing, except to an Arab. Why? Because of the status of restriction on women in their society, cultural differences/lifestyles, polygamy and other reasons.

Are they willing to take a foreigner for a business partner? The answer was "yes," but not an Arab. Were they willing to take up a permanent career in a foreign country? The answer was "no." Others responded, "It depends."

**Table 8**  
**Classification of Choices on**  
**Social Distance Dimensions**

Willing to...	Yes	No	It Depends
- Go back to the foreign country you have visited/worked?	70.27%	20.27%	9.46%
- Marry a foreigner	16.22%	56.76%	27.02%
- Take a foreigner for a business partner?	55.40%	40.54%	4.06%
- Take up a permanent career in a foreign country?	22.97%	65.16%	14.87%

It seems clear from the above responses that Filipino OCWs attitude towards the Arabs was rather negative and that their only reason/motivation for working in Saudi Arabia was economic or financial. They would agree to marry a foreigner but not an Arab. They generally would not trust an Arab as a business partner. Most of them never intended to settle permanently in the Middle East or in whichever country they were deployed, except of course if they married a foreigner.

Finally, are the Filipino OCWs generally satisfied with their cross-cultural contacts? The responses were "yes" 66 or 89.19% and "no" 5 or 6.76%; three or

4.05% did not register any response. One can conclude that difficult as it were for some Filipino OCWs to adjust because of climatic, cultural, religious differences or lifestyles, they managed to survive the stresses and strains of culture shock, if only to attain a decent standard of living for the family. The work may have entailed a lot of personal sacrifice, even loneliness, but all these redound to nothing compared to the realization of a dream for a better/brighter future.

## **Conclusions, Suggestions and Recommendation**

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, the following tentative conclusions are served:

1. The major reason of Filipino OCWs for applying for a job abroad are: (a) bigger income/improved standard of living for the family, (b) fulfillment of a dream of owning a house and lot, and (c) love for adventure/new challenges.
2. The three major groups of problems of Filipino OCWs are: (a) Those related to physical adjustment, (b) Those related to socio-cultural adjustment, (c) Those related to psychological adjustment, and (d) others, e.g., violation of contract terms and conditions.
3. Coping mechanisms to stresses and strains of culture shock include writing letters/correspondences, using sign language, keeping a dictionary handy, learning Arabic or seeking a Filipino interpreter of the host language; adapting an optimistic or positive view of life, acclimatization, cooking food the Filipino way, acceptance of and adjustment to cultural differences/lifestyles, developing high frustration tolerance, flexibility and self-control, developing leisure time activities, i.e., sports, listening to good music, reading the Bible, books, magazines, watching TV.
4. Majority of the Filipino OCWs were satisfied with their cross-cultural contacts/experiences.
5. Advantages of cross-cultural contacts include (a) increased self-reliance, (b) ability to take the viewpoint of other people, (c) ability to develop workable rather than idealistic policies, (d) broadened intellectual and social horizons, (e) better understanding of other cultures, (f) exposure to other cultures, (g) some personality or attitudinal changes.

Disadvantages include physical separation from home which may lead to deterioration/breakdown of marriages or family ties, neglect of children, deterioration of discipline and moral values; cultural differences give rise to misunderstanding, no freedom to practice own religion, racial discrimination/prejudices.

6. As reported by some OCWs, some values emerged as a result of their exposure to the host culture, e.g., self-reliance, broadmindedness or openmindedness, respectfulness, thrift, self-discipline, obedience, humility, risk-taking/ courage, helpfulness and nationalism,

7. Filipino OCWs generally have a desire to go back to the host country or work in a foreign country or even take a foreigner for a business partner (except an Arab) but they do not want to marry a foreigner or settle permanently in a foreign country.

#### **Suggestions for Prospective Migrants or Filipino OCWs to Facilitate Cross-Cultural Adjustment Abroad.**

As Triandis (in Brislin, et.al., 1975) has stated, when people belong to different cultures or have different "subjective cultures," interpersonal interaction is painfully unpleasant; however, when individuals are trained to understand the subjective culture of other groups, there is some evidence of improved intergroup relationships. A number of suggestions given by the OCWs in this sample relate to this idea, e.g., know as much as you can about the host country, understand and respect the customs, traditions, religious practices, restrictions on sex (if any). Follow/accept their laws and be friendly. Do not despise/criticize other cultures. Be open-minded. Know the character of your employer and co-employees. Cooperate with them.

Other suggestions relate to the personality characteristics of OCWs: emotional stability, self-discipline, self-control, patience/perseverance, industry, honesty, broadmindedness, flexibility, strong will and determination to succeed, high frustration tolerance, humility, courage, among others.

Learn to fight depression, especially loneliness. Keep busy. Do not keep eyes off your goal. Be ready to sacrifice. Strive to learn the host language.

Give yourself enough time to adjust to another's culture. Lower your expectations about other cultures to reduce conflict.

**Look before you leap. Make sure about where you are going before leaving. Expect the unexpected. Act intelligently.**

**Be friendly and fraternize with fellow Filipinos.**

**Be sensitive and observant. Listen to what people say and do. Do not be overconfident or too trusting of your associates or co-workers. They might fool you.**

**Follow the advice of the government. Always keep in touch/consult with Philippine Embassy officials regarding any problems encountered on the job site or with employer, so proper assistance may be extended.**

**The above suggestions are intended for prospective Filipino OCWs and migrants culled from the questionnaire and interviews. The section that follows gives recommendations for the Philippine government agencies.**

#### **Recommendations for POEA, OWWA, PASET and Other Agencies to Facilitate Cross-Cultural Adjustment of OCWs**

1. **Constitute a policy review committee on overseas employment to undertake assessment of the present conditions and realities of the programs and thereby recommend policy directions and thrusts in the areas of employment promotion, regulation and protection of overseas workers. Revision of rules and regulations governing overseas employment is also in order.**

2. **Strengthen pre-employment and pre-departure orientation programs and work towards full implementation of skills specific orientation modules. A suggestion coming from the OCWs in this study was to make sure that the seminar-lecturer has been an OCW himself/herself in the host country for which the orientation is being conducted. There should be more than one lecturer, not just one monopolizing the whole orientation seminar. Provide briefing kits and if possible video films to expose OCWs with country of destination and its culture.**

3. **Continue to review employment standards and push for better terms and conditions for Filipino manpower. Protect Filipino OCWs from unfair labor practices such as unjust deduction of salaries, low salaries, non-payment of salaries, physical tortures, and sexual abuses, especially among our women in the Middle East and in some Asian neighbors and many other shameful inflictions upon their morality and dignity as persons. As Andres (1990) says, it is incumbent upon all government and private sectors to join hands in protecting our overseas contract workers, as well as their families. In effect, the laws and regulations governing**

overseas employment must redound to the welfare of both the workers and the industry.

4. The Philippine Embassy and consular office must try to reach out even to the remotest area where Filipino OCWs are assigned in order to monitor their activities.

5. The Philippine Embassy should be allotted sufficient funds to help runaway/stowaway domestic helpers who are stranded in the host country because of maltreatment or abuse of employers or illegal recruitment.

6. POEA should see to it that provisions in the contract are followed to the letter by employers. Some cases of underpayment, delay of payment, or unnecessary salary deductions have been reported.

7. POEA, OWWA or recruitment agencies must conduct rigid screening of OCW's capabilities to work in certain occupations. Some workers go abroad without knowing any work and they resort to gambling.

8. The Philippine Embassy should give utmost attention to problematic cases, e.g., runaway domestic helpers who have been maltreated/physically abused by their employers.

9. POEA, OWWA or some other agency should see to it that salaries paid to OCWs are salaries commensurate to work done on the job site. Seaman salaries should approximate international standards.

10. Address of OCW welfare/government agencies should be made available to all deployed OCWs so they may be contacted in cases of problems.

11. The government should help OCWs claim their remittances left in Baghdad, Iraq due to the Gulf war. It should also give moral and financial support to displaced OCWs.

12. Assign OWWA personnel to visit different places in the Middle East and other countries to monitor OCWs activities and problems regularly.

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\* This study was conducted before the Flor Contemplacion case in 1995.

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